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INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS



A SERIES OF PUBLICA-
TIONS RELATING TO THE
AMERICAN ABORIGINES

VOL. II, No. 1

NEW YORK
MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
HEYE FOUNDATION
1919

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INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS



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THIS series of INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS is devoted primarily to the publication of the results of studies by members of the staff of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, and is uniform with HISPANIC NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS, published by the Hispanic Society of America, with which organization this Museum is in cordial coöperation.

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**THE PRE-IROQUOIAN
ALGONKIAN INDIANS
OF CENTRAL AND
WESTERN NEW YORK**

BY

ALANSON B. SKINNER

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THE PRE-IROQUOIAN ALGONKIAN INDIANS OF CENTRAL AND WESTERN NEW YORK

By ALANSON B. SKINNER

INTRODUCTION



It has long been a matter of common knowledge that the Iroquoian tribes found in possession of the region roughly outlined as central and western New York were relatively recent comers in that area. Remains of inhabitants of more remote periods and of different cultures have been discovered, yet up to the present time the origin of these peoples and the culture groups into which their relics fall have been in doubt. It is the purpose of this brief article to show that one of these cultures was Algonkian, and to point out certain criteria by which sites of Algonkian origin may be identified.

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	<p>That there is a genuine need for such criteria is proved by two important articles on the Iroquois by two of the foremost students of the area, Messrs Parker and Houghton,¹ both of whom voice a desire for further knowledge in this direction.</p> <p>As the writer is familiar with the archeology of the Algonkian tribes east and south of the territory under discussion and has had the good fortune to explore a number of Algonkian sites on the Seneca river in Cayuga county, New York, the heart of the historic Iroquois country, for the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, he will attempt to supply the desired data.</p> <p>The following constant features of known Algonkian culture may be designated as criteria for the determination and classification of any given site as Algonkian.</p> <p>HOW ALGONKIAN CRITERIA HAVE BEEN DETERMINED</p> <p>There are certain definite areas known to have been occupied by Algonkian</p>
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<p>tribes at the time of the arrival of the whites, and to have been retained by the same people during the period of colonization. Archeological research has shown that, by comparison of the remains, their culture may be traced from known historic sites, with traces of European contact, to prehistoric sites in which these traces are lacking and yet where the aboriginal artifacts are identical.</p> <p>Two such pure Algonkian regions are (1) coastal New York, including Long Island, and adjacent New England, and (2) the entire states of New Jersey and Delaware. It is therefore safe to assume that a selected series of remains from typical sites in this region will afford criteria for comparison with anomalous material found in the Iroquois country.</p> <p>TYPES OF SITES AND THEIR LOCATION</p> <p>Unlike that of the prehistoric Iroquois, the typical Algonkian village-site is found on a gently sloping knoll facing the south, with fresh water nearby; or it may occur on a bluff along a stream; again, it may</p>	
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	<p>be on a point at the junction of two streams; nor were the occupants at all averse to residing on the level flats in a river valley, or at the head or foot of a lake. I know of but one site, among hundreds examined, that is situated on a hilltop, as are so many prehistoric Iroquois forts. This is at Castleton, on the Hudson, a few miles south of Albany, New York. This is an early historic Mahican village with strong traces of Mohawk influence.</p> <p>Earthworks are known, and palisaded forts were stormed by the English and Dutch in Connecticut and on Long Island; but they are so rare that they may be considered as exceptional.</p> <p>The great shellheaps so characteristic of the tidewater Algonkian settlements are of course a matter of environment. In the interior their place is taken by occasional deposits of <i>Unio</i> shells, and more often by kitchen-middens composed of blackened earth and camp refuse, similar, except in contents, to those of the Iroquois, only, as they avoided hilltop sites,</p>
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<p>side-hill refuse dumps do not occur. Also, as a rule, the midden-refuse layers are much thinner than those of the Iroquois, and bespeak a shorter occupancy or fewer people, or both. The Algonkian country seems to have had few great permanent centers, like the Iroquois towns, though such do occur at Trenton, on Cohansey creek, and at Minisink, New Jersey; at Tottenville, Staten Island; on Long Island; at Inwood on Manhattan Island, and in some places along the Hudson. The rest of their territory seems to have been populated by roving bands.</p> <p>The ash-pit (on the coast its place is usually taken by the shell-pit) and the refuse-hole occur in abundance, and generally contain finer artifacts than the middens. These pits average three feet in depth and three to six feet in diameter. Many show traces leading one to believe that fires had been kindled in the bottom; others contain skeletons, and were presumably originally fire-pits in which the dead were later interred.</p>	
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	<p>Most Algonkian sites are placed upon sandy ground. This rule is almost unvarying near the coast, where sand was easily found. The Indians thus secured better drainage and more workable land.</p> <p>The rock-shelter was the common camping place in the mountains. Here an overhanging ledge or shallow cave, generally facing south and near fresh water, was the desideratum, and hundreds were utilized. They are almost unknown, at or least unreported, in the Iroquois country.</p> <p>Cemeteries, as such, are scarce near the coast; elsewhere they are usually near the villages, and generally on a sandy knoll. The burials are, as a rule, only three or four feet deep, and nearly always contain flexed skeletons. Two regular exceptions are found, as in the case of bundle burials, where the bones were gathered and deposited after the body had been exposed until the flesh was gone, and, in historic cemeteries, the bodies are often at length on the back, generally with traces of coffins. No great "bone-</p>
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<p>pits," or ossuaries, have ever been reported, though double or triple burials are occasionally noted, and the writer once discovered half a dozen bodies bundled together in a grave on northern Staten Island. Dogs are quite generally interred with some care in the cemeteries, sometimes with human remains, in this case as though they had been killed that their spirits might accompany their masters.</p> <p>In all the area under consideration, in which scores of burial places have been opened, probably not more than half a dozen have yielded artifacts with the dead. The best known of these are at Minisink, New Jersey, and at Tottenville, Staten Island, the former being an historic site and under strong Iroquois influence. The objects, when found, are usually at the head, shoulders, or hips. There is no fixed orientation of the burials.</p> <p>Quarries, where argillite, jasper, and quartz were obtained, are known on the Delaware river in New Jersey and east-</p>	
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	<p>ern Pennsylvania, and in Westchester county, New York.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TYPES OF ARTIFACTS</p> <p><i>Pottery.</i>—The archaic form of Algonkian pottery, and one which persisted long after the coming of Iroquois influence, is the well-known pointed-bottom variety, which needs no further description here. It is found along the coast from Virginia to Maine, and its presence on certain non-Iroquoian sites in central New York, and even in Canada, is well established. Christopher Wren² shows vessels of this type in his plates 1, 2, 3, and 24, and Willoughby³ figures a number from New England, especially from Maine. A similar vessel, obtained at Fort Erie, Ontario, is in the collection of the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences.</p> <p>Another typical Algonkian vessel—a variant of the pointed-base type, but with the bottom restored in conformity with other vessels found on the same site—was obtained by the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, from</p>
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<p>the late Dr B. I. Buckland. This great vessel (55 inches in rim circumference)</p>  <p>FIG. 1.—Large Algonkian jar from Owasco Lake Park, Auburn, N. Y.</p> <p>was found at a site in Auburn, at the foot of Owasco lake; it is quite characteristic</p>	
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	<p data-bbox="370 279 951 388">of certain Algonkian forms (fig. 1), and though the Iroquois often made large vessels, the Algonkian tribes, poorer pot-</p> <div data-bbox="412 413 915 1088">  </div> <p data-bbox="381 1100 940 1125">FIG. 2.—Algonkian potsherds from near Athens, Pa.</p> <p data-bbox="370 1157 951 1226">ters though they were, surpassed them in this respect.</p>
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<p>A third pure Algonkian type is shown in fig. 2. The fragments of these receptacles were found on an Algonkian camp-site on the banks of the Susquehanna, near Athens, Pennsylvania, and somewhat similar sherds and vessels came from the Munsee cemetery at Montague, New Jersey, and the Owasco Lake site in Cayuga county, New York. Similar sherds are found throughout New Jersey and on Long Island.</p> <p>The later Algonkian settlements lying within range of Iroquois war-parties soon felt their influence. Escaped prisoners or free sojourners in the country of the Five Nations learned something from their conquerors, and accordingly we find on later prehistoric and historic sites, pottery of decided eastern Iroquois type. Fig. 3 exhibits some sherds from Morrisania, Borough of the Bronx, New York City, in the Museum's collection, the gift of Messrs Bolton and Calver. They are truly typical of the modified form. This type does not appear in central New Jersey, nor on eastern Long Island, local-</p>	
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	<p data-bbox="326 310 909 381">ities remote from Iroquois war-trails. It was common on the Montague site, and</p>  <p data-bbox="324 1110 907 1161">FIG. 3.—Sherds of sub-Iroquois vessels from Morrisania, Bronx, New York City.</p> <p data-bbox="324 1188 907 1259">the writer strongly suspects that some of the vessels from Pennsylvania, figured by</p>
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<p>Wren,¹ were made by Munsee Delawares.² No western Iroquois, Seneca, Erie, Neutral, or Huron types occur, though Willoughby³ figures some from New England, which was overrun by Canadian savages, including the Huron, during the time of the French and Indian wars.</p> <p>On the other hand, the writer has not seen any of this modified Iroquoian pottery from an Algonkian site in central New York, nor is it to be expected. When the Iroquois entered New York, they expelled their predecessors (we say predecessors, for all known central New York Algonkian sites are purely prehistoric), who departed so hastily under this hostile pressure that the culture of their aggressors was not impressed on their own.</p> <p>It may be added that the steatite dish, oblong, shallow, and with small knobs or handles at the ends, is an Algonkian artifact, and occurs throughout their range. Fragments were found at the Mud Lock site in Cayuga, New York, by the writer. This form is non-Iroquoian.</p> <p>In decoration we find the Algonkians</p>	
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	<p>partial to stamped designs, although at Trenton, New Jersey, and on eastern Long Island, their vessels bear bold, free-hand, angular, incised ornaments. They favored the chevron and herring-bone patterns, and never (with a single Staten Island exception, where raised conventional human faces are found on a jar from Mariner's Harbor) produced life forms. On modified Iroquois or sub-Iroquois vessels human faces were sometimes indicated by lines, dots, or circles, on the angles of vessels in imitation of the Mohawk-Onondaga. These latter vessels were nearly always decorated with incised angular patterns copied from the Iroquois, but sometimes stamps of antler, bone, or wood (one of the former was found at Glen Cove, Long Island, by Mr Harrington), were employed to give a more conventional effect, and sometimes natural stamps—the edges of clam- or scallop-shells—were utilized.</p> <p>Designs produced by the cord-wrapped stick are exceedingly common throughout the pure Algonkian area, and they occur</p>
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<p>alike at Owasco lake, Mud Lock, and Howlands island (all in Cayuga county, New York), along the shores of the St Lawrence in Jefferson county, and at Fort Erie, Ontario. As an Iroquois type of design, this is not at all typical—in fact it is almost unknown. The Algonkians also marked much of their pottery with a fabric-wrapped paddle.</p> <p>Another typical Algonkian form of decoration, but found more commonly in western New York and in Ontario than on the coast, was produced by punching with a small stick in the plastic clay before firing, making a round hole on one side and a small hemispherical boss on the other.</p> <p>Algonkian pottery is always decorated on the rim, the designs sometimes, even frequently, extending down the outer side. The interior of the rim is sometimes slightly ornamented, but this embellishment does not extend downward for more than an inch or two.</p> <p>Although, in common with the Iroquoian peoples, the Algonkians used the</p>	
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	<p data-bbox="308 279 888 424">coil process in constructing vessels, they seem to have preferred to temper the clay with burnt and pounded shell than with stone similarly treated.</p> <div data-bbox="425 456 767 1063">  </div> <p data-bbox="311 1078 888 1130">FIG. 4.—Slightly bent, tubular, clay, Algonkian pipe from Wysox, Pa.</p> <p data-bbox="311 1161 888 1232">The Algonkian tribes did not place pottery with their dead, as a rule. In fact,</p>
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<p>mortuary vessels are reported only from the historic cemeteries at Minisink and from Pelham Bay Park, and from two or three localities on Long Island. In middens and pits pottery is abundant.</p> <p><i>Pipes.</i>—As a pipe-maker the Algonkian did not equal the Iroquois. The typical earthenware pipe of New Jersey and coastal New York Indians was either a simple straight tube, expanding a little at the bowl, or the bowl was bent slightly upward, perhaps as much as thirty-five degrees. A straight, tubular pipe of steatite is in the Museum's collections from Manhattan Island. In western New York a more angular type occurs as well. Fig. 4 shows a slightly bent tubular pipe in the Museum's collection from a fire-pit at Wysox, Pennsylvania, on the Susquehanna. It is decidedly non-Iroquoian.</p> <p>In stone the Algonkians used especially the monitor pipe with flat and thin base. This type of pipe is not at all like the so-called "monitor pipe" of the mounds, and never bears an effigy. Fig. 5 shows</p>	
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an example from Wolfe island in the St Lawrence, now in the collection of the Museum. Similar pipes come from Staten Island, Long Island, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

A human face of clay, broken from an effigy pipe, was found by Mr Harrington



FIG. 5.—Platform pipe from Wolfe island, St Lawrence river.

at Port Washington, Long Island; and a clay effigy pipe of Iroquoian type was found by Messrs Pepper and Heye at Minisink, New Jersey.⁴ These three pipes, and a fragment of what may have been a bird-effigy pipe from Watchogue,

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<p>in the collection of the Staten Island Association of Arts and Sciences, stand alone, and all show Iroquois influence; indeed the Minisink pipe may be of Iroquois origin.</p> <p>The pottery pipes of the Algonkians are all short, rarely exceeding three or four inches. Their stone pipes are larger, one platform pipe from Staten Island being 9½ inches in length. What Mr Parker has aptly said about the vast difference between Iroquoian stone and earthenware pipes is also generally true of those of the Algonkians. Without knowing the circumstances of their finding, no one would ascribe them to the same makers. A few stone bowl pipes, intended for use with reed stems, have been reported. In contradistinction to the pipes of the Iroquois, those of the Algonkians, both whole and broken, are exceedingly rare on all types of sites.</p> <p><i>Stonework.</i>—The grooved axe was the typical chopping tool of the Algonkians on the coast and in New Jersey. They also used the grooved maul, grooved adze, gouge, and celt.</p>	
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	<p>While the grooved axe does not commonly occur on Algonkian sites in western New York, it is not unknown, although the celt seems to be far more abundant. The same may be said of the grooved adze. On the other hand, the gouge is rather more abundant than on the coast. The writer found it very common along Seneca river, north of Cayuga lake, and obtained specimens in the midden at Mud Lock, an example of which is illustrated in pl. IV, a, of the paper pertaining to that site.</p> <p>Of the celt, little need be said, except that it is less angular in cross-section; it resembles the Iroquoian implement, although the small, celt-like objects so common on Iroquoian sites (many diminutive examples, perhaps pottery graters, have been found at the palisaded Iroquois fort at Locke), do not commonly occur.</p> <p>Grooved net-sinkers are characteristic. They occur throughout New Jersey and coastal New York, and have been gathered along Seneca river, especially at</p>
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<p>Mud Lock. Flat, notched, river pebbles, also used as sinkers, are common to both cultures.</p> <p>In projectile points and allied artifacts, while the Algonkians knew and used the triangular arrowpoint, there are reasons for believing that the coastal Algonkians and those of New Jersey employed it only in war. It is less common than the notched forms, and those reported to have been found in and among human bones on Staten, Manhattan, and Long islands are exclusively of this variety, when not of bone or antler. In contradistinction to the Iroquois, Algonkian triangles are heavier, broader, and more apt to be cut in at the base, often having one side or barb longer than the other.</p> <p>In central New York, notched and stemmed points are one criterion of Algonkian culture, although Mr Parker found triangular ones almost exclusively at the Owasco Lake site. The vast majority of the points at Mud Lock on Seneca river and on adjacent sites were notched or</p>	
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	<p>stemmed. The Algonkians also made a great variety of chipped forms, including drills, knives, and large "spear-points," all of which are common on their sites.</p> <p>It may be said here that, like most other students of archeology, the writer has observed the Iroquois distaste for stoneworking. This is not true of the Algonkians, who reveled in stonework of every variety, but were poor in fashioning bone and antler, in which the Iroquois excelled. One may expect to find that stone articles preponderate over those of bone and antler on all Algonkian sites, in both number and quality.</p> <p>The Algonkian Indians made the beautiful polished stone tubes, banner-stones, double-holed gorgets (they also used the singly perforated pendant), and bird-stones. These objects are known throughout the regions determined as pure Algonkian. They are constant features, and therefore are found on Algonkian sites in the Iroquois country. Bird-stones, for example, are especially abundant on the Ontario peninsula; they occur</p>
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<p>also along Seneca river and in Westchester county, in New Jersey, and in Connecticut, as also do stone tubes, banner-stones, and gorgets.</p> <p>Granted that occasional polished slates, etc., are reported from Iroquois sites, it must still be admitted that, if the collectors are sure of their data, anything may be expected on late historic Iroquois sites, where whole villages were made up of foreign captives, as at Squakie Hill, colonized by Muskwaki, or Fox, an Algonkian tribe. Even so, such anomalies are rare. A grooved axe in the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, was found in a Neutral grave on the shores of Lake Medad, Ontario. It is of a type common in Michigan, the distinctive feature of which is projections at the grooves on each side, and we know historically that the Neuters warred on the Algonkians of Michigan, bringing back numerous captives.</p> <p>The scrapers of the Algonkians were plain chips with fine secondary working, or points and butts of arrowheads re-</p>	
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	<p>chipped and often showing the notched or stemmed bases of the originals. Ser-rated scrapers are almost unknown, although common enough among some of the western Iroquois.</p> <p>The long stone pestle is Algonkian, and is found in every part of their range, but the bell-pestle is absent. The shallow stone mortar, often hollowed on both sides, is also Algonkian, but the pitted hammerstone was shared with other cultures.</p> <p>Stone heads of life-size depicting human features, made by some of the coast Algonkians, are found in New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, and New York, but apparently were not made by the central New York people. They may be considered a peculiarly Lenapé, or Delaware, feature. This is true also of small stone pendants with the human face carved in relief or etched upon them. Engraved stones, sherds, or bones, with figures of men or animals incised thereon, are characteristic of the New Jersey and Long Island natives. That they are common</p>
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<p>in central and western New York is doubtful.</p> <p>The stone "plummet," while more abundant in New England, seems to be rather frequently found throughout the Algonkian range.</p> <p><i>Native Copper.</i>—That all the Algonkians had native copper, although very sparingly, there seems to be no question. The celt, knife, awl, and bead are all known, and from every part of their country. The writer found what appeared to be a bow-guard of 110 short, tubular, beads, rolled from thinly hammered native copper, on the left wrist of a skeleton exhumed at Mud Lock. These beads differ in no manner from similar specimens from eastern Long Island. A native copper spear found near Kipps island in Seneca river, near Montezuma, is another typical example. Native copper is not found on prehistoric Iroquois sites. The Museum possesses a gorget, beads, celts, and an awl from Hewlett, Long Island, and an adze from Croton point on the Hudson.</p>	
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	<p><i>Bone and Antler.</i>—Bone awls are fairly common, and generally very poorly made, often mere pointed bone slivers. Bone fish-hooks are exceedingly scarce. A single specimen was obtained by the writer in a shell-pit on the site of the Siwanoy village of Snakapins on Clasons point, Bronx, New York City,⁵ and another has been reported by Tooker from Long Island.⁶ Bone beads are almost absent, at least in coastal New York and in New Jersey, only one typical specimen being known. Two bone combs have been reported from sites on the upper Delaware that had been under Iroquois influence.</p> <p>Bone scrapers or reaming tools cut from the metapodial bone of the deer or the elk are found everywhere, though never abundantly. Occasionally a needle with a central perforation is encountered, but cylinders of antler, used for chipping stone points, are common. Fairly numerous also are cups of tortoise-shell, and, less frequently, rattles of the same material have been noted. Specimens of both</p>
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<p>the latter were found at Mud Lock in Cayuga, and cups are recorded from Staten and Long islands, Manhattan Island, and the Borough of the Bronx, among other places.</p> <p>The tips of antler tines were cut off and hollowed out to make conical arrow-heads, and others, flat and triangular, or conical, were made of bone; but these are objects known also to the Iroquois.</p> <p>Harpoons are all but unknown in coastal New York and New Jersey, one, of a single-barbed, perforated type, being in our collections from Manhattan Island; but they were found at Mud Lock, Cayuga, in graves and middens, and Mr Parker recovered them from the Owasco Lake site. Algonkian harpoons resemble Iroquoian forms.</p> <p>With a few minor exceptions this closes the list of Algonkian bonework, insignificant when compared with the great array of Iroquoian bone and antler artifacts. The writer alone has found in one season's digging on the famous Erie site at Ripley, more specimens of bone and</p>	
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	<p>antler than he has gathered in ten years' work in coastal New York and New Jersey together. On the other hand, bone material is much more abundant on the Algonkian sites in central and western New York, possibly because hunting was better there. Human bone seems never to have been utilized at all by the Algonkians, although it was not infrequently used by the Iroquois.</p> <p><i>Mica</i>.—Plates of mica, often bearing incised figures, are found throughout Algonkian territory, though nowhere are they common. There is a fine specimen from Shinnecock hills, Long Island, in the New York State Museum at Albany, bearing a figure of a mythical serpent-like monster. Others, though plain, come from Staten Island, and the writer found one in a grave at Mud Lock, Cayuga.</p> <p><i>Shell</i>.—Although dwelling in a region where abundant shell was to be had, from which ornaments could be made, and bearing a reputation as expert shellworkers, the Algonkians left very few shell</p>
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<p>objects. Casual specimens, as tubes, beads, gorgets, and cups, have been reported, especially from Long Island and Westchester county. The best shell objects known are figured in the article on Minisink by Messrs Heye and Pepper.⁴ At this site were unearthed some splendid effigy gorgets, principally bird forms. As before mentioned, Minisink is historic, and shows great Iroquois influence.</p> <p>As on the coast, central and western New York Algonkian sites do not yield shell objects in quantity, but an incalculable number, if we include wampum beads, have been obtained from old Iroquois villages and cemeteries.</p> <p>This concludes a brief summary of Algonkian criteria in contrast with those of the Iroquoian tribes intended for the guidance of the field-worker. In another article, on a prehistoric site at Mud Lock, Cayuga, New York,⁷ may be found an example of the application of these criteria to a site hitherto supposed to be Iroquoian, but which fulfills the</p>	
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	<p>conditions given above as constant Algonkian factors.</p> <p>NOTES</p> <p>1a. PARKER, A. C. The Origin of the Iroquois as suggested by their Archeology. <i>American Anthropologist</i>, N. S., vol. 18, no. 4, October-December, 1916, p. 479.</p> <p>1b. HOUGHTON, F. W. The Characteristics of Iroquoian Village Sites of Western New York. <i>American Anthropologist</i>, N. S., vol. 18, no. 4, October-December, 1916, p. 508.</p> <p>2. WREN, CHRISTOPHER. A Study of North Appalachian Indian Pottery. Plymouth, Pa., 1914.</p> <p>3. WILLOUGHBY, C. C. Pottery of the New England Indians. <i>Putnam Anniversary Volume</i>, pp. 100, 101, figs. 15, 17, 18, New York, 1909.</p> <p>4. HEYE, GEORGE G., and PEPPER, GEORGE H. Exploration of a Munsee Cemetery near Montague, New Jersey. <i>Contributions from the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation</i>, vol. II, no. 1, 1915.</p> <p>5. SKINNER, ALANSON. Exploration of Aboriginal Sites at Throgs Neck and Clasons Point, New York City. <i>Contributions from the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation</i>, vol. V, no. 4, 1919.</p>
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<p>6. BEAUCHAMP, WILLIAM M. Horn and Bone Implements of the New York Indians. <i>Bulletin 50, New York State Museum</i>, fig. 209, p. 307, Albany, 1902.</p> <p>7. SKINNER, ALANSON B. An Ancient Algonkian Fishing Village at Cayuga, New York. <i>Indian Notes and Monographs</i>, vol. II, no. 2, New York, 1919.</p>	
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